

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 4048

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MNUC MARR OCLR NO

SUBJ: NIMITZ AFFAIR: A POST MORTEM

REF: (A) CNO 131604Z SEP 75

(B) OSLO 3904

1. OUR UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO HAVE USS NIMITZ VISIT OSLO THIS SEPTEMBER ENDED WITH A PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT JOINTLY AGREED UPON BY FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND AND MYSELF WHICH WAS ISSUED SIMULTANEOUSLY ON SEPT 16, 1975 (FULL TEXT AT PARA 6). I BELIEVE THAT US-NORWEGIAN RELATIONS WERE NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED AND THAT FUNDAMENTAL, LONG-RAGE, US OBJECTIVE -- ROUTINE NPW ACCESS TO NORWEGIAN PORTS -- HAS BEEN WELL SERVED.

2. MY DISCUSSIONS OF NIMITZ ISSUE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND AND DEFENSE MINISTER FOSTERVOLL REINFORCE MY CONVICTIONS IN THIS REGARD. BOTH MEN WERE APOLOGETIC, REGRETTED THE TURN-OF-EVENTS AND ASSURED ME THAT THEIR GOAL WAS TO HAVE US NPW VISITS TO NORWAY TREATED AS ROUTINE NAVAL PORT CALLS. IT WAS EMPHASIZED THAT THE

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NORWEGIAN CANCELLATION OF THE VISIT WAS BASED ON THE

SIZE OF THE SHIP AND RESULTANT NAVIGATIONAL PROBLEMS
PERCEIVED BY THE PILOTS, NOT THE NUCLEAR PROPULSION
ASPECT.

3. ON BALANCE, I BELIEVE WE CAME OFF BETTER THAN
MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE
VISIT DID NOT BECOME A MAJOR ISSUE IN THE ELECTIONS.
THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE VISIT POSED BY ITS
TIMING EVENTUALLY COMPELLED CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUE
BY THE CABINET. AS A RESULT, WE OBTAINED WHAT AMOUNTS
TO A CABINET-LEVEL DECISION IN FAVOR OF NUCLEAR SHIP
VISITS, SO THAT I WOULD HOPE THEY WILL BE TREATED IN
THE FUTURE NO DIFFERENTLY THAN THOSE OF CONVENTIONALLY-
POWERED VESSELS.

4. IT REMAINS IMPORTANT, OF COURSE, THAT THESE VISITS
NOT ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO A POSTURE OF DETERRENT STRENGTH
ON THE NORTHERN FLANK, BUT ALSO ARE GENUINELY WELCOMED
BY THE NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES AND PEOPLE. WE WILL STILL
NEED TO BE CAREFUL, THEREFORE, WHEN SCHEDULING ANY
MAJOR SHIP VISITS TO SPACE THEM OUT IN RELATIONSHIP TO
EACH OTHER AND TO DOMESTIC EVENTS IN NORWAY.

5. TO CAPITALIZE ON THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE OF THE
MINISTERS TOWARD NUCLEAR POWERED SHIP VISITS, AND
ESTABLISH THE PRECEDENT, I HEARTILY CONCUR WITH PROMPT
REQUEST FOR OSLO PORT VISIT OF USS CALIFORNIA (C6N-36)
OCT 6-13. I ALSO, OF COURSE, WELCOME VISIT OF USS ALBANY.

6. TEXT OF JOINT PRESS RELEASE:

BEGIN QUOTE

THE VISIT OF THE USS NIMITZ TO OSLO WHICH WAS PLANNED
FOR NEXT WEEK HAS BEEN CANCELLED. THE NORWEGIAN COAST
DIRECTORATE, WHICH HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT THE US NAVY
BELIEVES THE SHIP CAN BE BROUGHT WITH OPERATIONAL SAFETY
INTO OSLO, NEVERTHELESS HAS REACHED THE CONCLUSION
THAT NAVIGATION PROBLEMS RELATING TO THE PASSAGE OF A
SHIP OF THE NIMITZ'S SIZE THROUGH THE DROBAK STRAITS
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ARE CONSIDERABLE, AND IT ADVISED AGAINST THE VISIT.
IT IS THE AIM TO HAVE AMERICAN NAVAL VISITS TO OSLO
BY OTHER SHIPS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

END QUOTE.
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